

*Preservation is Progress  
...may we be worthy stewards...*

# *Chautauqua Historical Society*

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Winter 2008

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: winter, spring, and fall.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA), and Patron levels.
- PBA members have a membership in the Chautauqua Network
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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*We have 17 PBA, 62 Patron, members, and will send this Newsletter to 140 households.*



*Our community was called Piasa Chautauqua one hundred years ago. It was reorganized in 1909.*

*The community name was changed to New Piasa Chautauqua.*

*We will celebrate, then, a centennial anniversary in 2009.*

*How might we celebrate this important event?  
For our suggestion, see the story on pps. 4-5.*

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## *The President's message*



Winter days for Chautauqua's means dreaming about past summers and planning what we will be doing next season. As I sit at my computer reviewing our archival projects, I am struck by all the stories that make up our history. There are stories about people, buildings and organizations that, woven together, create

our Chautauqua history.

Next season we will focus on oral histories. We already have some in our collection. Judy Hurd has done many and Karen Foss helped us produce a video about Chautauqua, which included many oral histories. We won't be able to interview everyone and I know you all have many stories of your own. Please write them down for us. They will be entered into our computer database.

Last summer the Tuesday group sorted through many programs of the Chautauqua Players, Teen Plays, Children's Day and other presentations. These programs are now archived in albums and listed in a database. The collection includes several framed pictures of various plays. Did you know that Lyn Bryan directed several plays on the Auditorium stage, and her degree in theater qualified her to sponsor a Thespian Troupe? That is a great addition to our Chautauqua Theater program.

I am excited to announce that Lori and Scott Adams have contacted us about their collection of videos and discs of theater productions. Lee Wagers has added many of her photographs of people to the collection. We

need your help to complete our theater collection, as many programs are missing. We also need videos, photographs, and any other materials you may have kept over the years. People and their stories are an important part of our historical records; they should not be forgotten. If you have stories to share, contact us about our oral history project.

Our collection is growing. Now we have the problem of finding sufficient space to store materials safely. For now, everything is stored in the Administration Building, and we have no room to grow. In addition, access to the building is limited. Mornings are the best time to work and the building is only available on Tuesday and Thursday. However, on Thursday mornings there are other fun activities going on that our people don't want to miss.

This newsletter features the Historical Society's position on future plans for archival storage of the collection. When I was at the Chautauqua network meeting in New York last summer I listened to people from other Chautauquas describe their archival programs and the buildings dedicated for safe storage. It made me realize how very far behind we are in solving this problem. In the past few years we have been able to pull things out from under beds, in dry attics, and moist basements. To repeat, we collect, catalog, and store things in the Administration Building, but we are out of space. The community needs to give serious thought to how our historical photographs, programs, and other records are preserved. I feel as a community we need to seriously address this problem.

**Preservation is progress.** I hope you will support the Chautauqua Historical Society's long-range plan for reuse of the space on the second floor of the Kentucky Home. Please remember it is our history we are preserving.

*Rose Tomlinson*

## **PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS**

*....may we be worthy stewards...*

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*The mission and purpose of the Chautauqua Historical Society is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua.*



## *Chautauquas in the 21st Century*

Sometime last season I had a conversation with NPC President Bill Jackson in which he told me he contacted folks at the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly and asked for a copy of their annual program. The MSSA is located in Monteagle, Tenn. It has called itself the "Chautauqua of the South" for well over one hundred years, founded in 1883. Bill was surprised to learn this last fact, he told me. He thought our New Piasa Chautauqua was the second oldest Chautauqua.

Not so, I told him. We were far from the second oldest, even among the remaining 11 permanent assemblies. Present day, we are the seventh oldest Chautauqua still conducting an annual program.

Most of what we know about the other chautauquas comes from the "Mother" site, and from our contacts in the Chautauqua Network. The Network meets once a

year at a different site each year. The 2007 meeting was in New York. The 2008 meeting will be at the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly.



Porch gladiolas are everywhere in sight when you walk the grounds of the Chautauqua Institution in New York and the Bay View Assembly in Michigan.

permanent assembly sites at one time or another in the past four years.

Last year's New York meeting was different from other recent meetings because, in part, the attendees included general members and officers of the other sites and permanent staff from some of the larger institutions. This was true for the Lakeside Chautauqua, the Colorado Chautauqua, Ocean Park Chautauqua (in Maine), Bay View, and of course, the Chautauqua Institution. We had an opportunity to listen to Directors and Executive Directors and Accountants and Business



Porch life is inescapable when your cottage has this many porches. Photo taken at the Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, New York, July 2007.

Managers and lawyers, all paid staff. We had an opportunity to listen to hiring practices, rental and membership policies, risk management problems, whether alcohol could be consumed at public events and/or in restaurants, and so on. Still, there was time to discuss programs, the role of religion, and the primacy of activities for children and family. What we learned again that the 21st century Chautauquas are very different from one another, and, at the same time, very much alike.

*Piasa Bluffs Assembly* members of the Chautauqua Historical Society are automatically enrolled as members of the Chautauqua Network, and receive a bi-annual Newsletter from the Network and an invitation to the annual conference. The tentative dates for the 2008 meeting at Monteagle are July 17-20. There is a registration fee for the conference that includes daily gate charges and most meals. "Cottage stay" is encouraged, where you are the guest of a local cottage owner on the grounds. The schedule includes special Network meetings and an opportunity to participate in the host's program, in this case, Monteagle. Why not consider making this your first Chautauqua Network conference? Talk to Rose or Tim for further information.



Monteagle Cottage



## About Stewardship

Let's start at the same place, establish a common definition. **What's an Archives?** According to the U. S. National Archives, "An archives is a place where people can go to gather firsthand facts, data, and evidence from letters, reports, memos, photographs, and other primary sources." Though we might not realize it immediately, all of us have our personal archives, and are archivists of a sort. Our personal archives, our letters, postcards, photographs, brochures, birth and marriage certificates, and other legal documents are in filing cabinets, a box in the basement or under a bed, in a bank vault, a chest on the side porch, or in the attic.

Why do we keep this "stuff?" We want to remember important events, to prove they occurred. We want to explain or understand why something happened, for personal, financial, or sentimental reasons. We want to tell our personal story, our family's story. We are interested in preservation of a legacy.



The lower floor of the Administration Building of the Bay View Association (Michigan) has been made over for an archival space, environmentally-controlled, with generous storage space and areas for research and study.

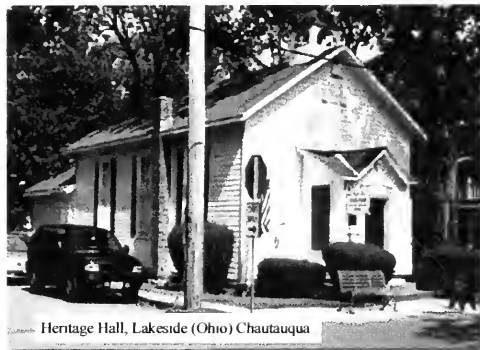
Every issue of the Newsletter states the mission of the Historical Society. Formulated in 2003, and put briefly, the mission and purpose of the Chautauqua Historical Society is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua. And we seek to be worthy stewards of that mission.

Why preserve? A survey conducted by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) in 2005, sent to over four thousand people, found that 55% of the respondents believed the main reason for preserving cultural and historical resources is to maintain a sense of place and a strong community. Participants believed preservation was a local "cultural/historical environment" issue that can and should be addressed by cooperative public and private efforts.

*Preservation is progress.* We believe it is important to keep reminding ourselves that we are more than a summer, family-oriented resort on the Mississippi River. We are part of a very historic, substantial, and powerful national and cultural movement that continues to have import in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's time we added a *stewardship* component to our management system.

Historic preservation is a significant way to manage change and provide guidance and direction in the revitalization of community resources, the collection and cataloguing of documents and artifacts that contribute to an understanding of our community history, how we developed, and where we are going in the future. We have come to understand and accept the need for the New Piasa Chautauqua community to engage in preservation planning, to determine general and specific needs, to define implementation strategies, including a financial plan, and to create a scheduled course of action for the community.

Over the last three or four decades, there has been sporadic interest in long-range planning in our community, with varying results. Tim Tomlinson submitted a motion to the Chautauqua Historical Society directors to develop a long-range preservation plan. The motion



Heritage Hall, Lakeside (Ohio) Chautauqua





was seconded by Chris Hagin and adopted by the Board by email response (a process regulated by Bylaws provisions). The plan will be shared with the NPC Board's Long-Range Planning and Budget committees, for review and comment, and circulated to the entire Chautauqua community later this spring.

As envisioned now, the long-range *preservation plan* will have several components. First, we hope to establish what should and will be collected: individual family records (documents and photographs and artifacts) that might be donated; Board records, including minutes, plans, legal records, leaseholder files; organizational records—LCIA, Church Assembly, Chautauqua Player's, Yacht, Club, Men's Club, and the Historical Society; and other materials that become important and/or available. The IHPA's



Once a Chautauqua cottage at Lakeside Ohio, this building is now the Archives Center, providing space for important collections and the gathering of research scholars interested in Lakeside's rich history.

Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan provides guidelines to establishing principles and practices for preservation activities; we plan to ask for help from this state agency. We expect help also from local archives, including the libraries in Alton, Jerseyville, the Principia College Archives, and the Missouri Historical Society.

Second, our preservation plan will include adaptive re-use of structures from the past for modern use. As a start, and because the collections to be preserved need a structure in which they can be preserved, we will submit a plan for alterations and improvements to the second floor of the Kentucky Home. The Historical Society was largely responsible for developing the plans and organizing the funding for a "first phase" adaptive reuse of the Kentucky Home, the rebuilding of the north wall of the structure, including a new



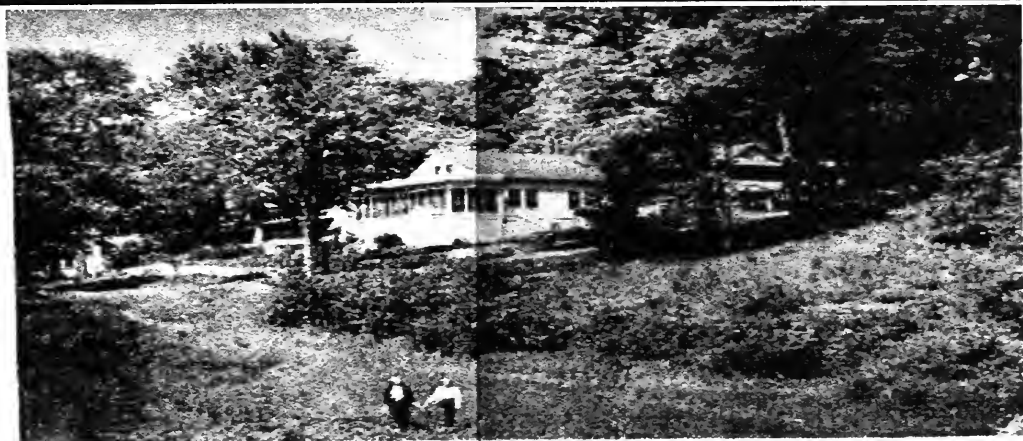
The success of our efforts at the Administration Building over the past three years has convinced us we need storage space to house and protect our growing collections. The second floor of the Kentucky Home has space for archival collections, research, and can fill some of the needs of other Chautauqua organizations.

kitchen and a patio area widely used by the community. We hope the "second phase" will gain widespread acceptance and favor. At the very least it will create and organize space that presently is unusable and unused. At best it will provide a means for collections preservation and accessibility to historical materials, and provide space for use by other organizations, including the LCIA and the Player's. As plans develop, they will be shared with our sister organizations.

Finally, any responsible long-range plan requires financial planning and the amassing and allocation of resources. The first phase of the Kentucky Home's renewal as a community resource was financed by a consortium of funds, both "private" and "public," including a substantial contribution from the Historical Society, primarily from profits from the Jersey Door. For this new renewal idea, the Historical Society (again from the Jersey Door) is ready to contribute more than \$10,000, and hopes for additional Jersey Door funds from the 2008 season. We are at work now on a "complete" funding proposal, to be shared with appropriate Board committees, sister organizations, and finally with all leaseholders/shareholders for approval and implementation.

*Preservation is progress. It is a community responsibility. It is a community opportunity. The dedication of a well-planned and well-equipped Archives Center can be the centerpiece of New Piasa Chautauqua's centennial year. For the Historical Society, we are committed and dedicated to this possibility.*





St. Louis Avenue from the ball field, one of the earliest entrances to the Chautauqua grounds, from a 1960 photo, St. Louis Post-Dispatch. The very prominent cottage (center photo) is the Wagers-Miller cottage.

### Chautauqua at 75

Imagine the summer of 1960, Chautauqua's 75th annual season. The upcoming election will be fought by a young Senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, against the sitting Vice President, Richard M. Nixon. It will come to be known for a very stirring television debate between the two candidates, and a very close popular vote, decided, actually, by the final returns from the state of Illinois.

Imagine 1960. The summer program will focus on the community's anniversary. Many families known to have been Chautauqua owners, renters, or simply friends will be invited to participate in the celebrations. A date has been set for a special contra dance, "Old Man River," and the special Children's weekend is scheduled for mid-August. An exhibit of old programs and memorabilia will be set up in the Piasa Springs Hotel lobby, a forerunner of the Chautauqua Historical Society's educational activities.

The chair of the celebratory program (and of the NPC Board in 1960) was Harold R. Colbert. He told reporter Clarissa Start of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, "I began going up when I started courting the Lawrence McDaniel's daughter, Lydia, and to some of the older families here, I'm still Lydia McDaniel's husband."

Another member of the committee, Fred Bernet, wrote a brief pamphlet that described the history of Chautauqua. "There were no cottages, just a few tents, no electric lights, or power, just coal oil lamps and stars, no swimming pool, just the Father of Waters at our

doorstep." Ray Behymer, whose family had participated in Chautauqua life since the early 1900s, as renters until 1909 and cottage owners since 1910, was also a member of the committee. His father had been a long time writer for the Post-Dispatch, and was renowned as a story-teller. F. A. Behymer passed away in 1956, but his wife, Ray's mother, operated a souvenir shop from 1909 to 1955, and in 1960, at age 92, was still active in Chautauqua programs.

Some of the families who were important to the 75th anniversary are gone from the community: the Bernets, the Behymers, the Rains, the Brainerds. Some who had a similar multi-decade connection to Chautauqua in 1960 are still here and continue to be active: the Colberts, the Griesediecks, the Hamptons, the Dreschers, and the Grundmanns.

*Why these thoughts now? Another celebratory opportunity is on the very near horizon. In 1909, a group of civic-minded Chautauatuans realized the financial drains and misfortunes of the previous two years had sapped the community's financial viability and threatened its future. These men and women raised \$15,000 to satisfy creditors and provide a foundation for another season. That was 1909, our first reorganization. We should be thinking now how we can celebrate and commemorate that very important moment, on its 100th anniversary, only two years away, 2009.*

Direct quotes and some of the information in this article are from a St. Louis Post-Dispatch article by Clarissa Start, "Chautauqua—Echoes of another Era," exact date unknown.



## Pana Illinois Chautauqua

Locally this public green space is called **Kitchell Park**. It is an important part of the history of the small town of Pana, Illinois. Comprising 40 acres, it's about the size of the Missouri Botanical Garden, and is one of the few parks in the country listed on the *National Register of Historic Places*.

John and Mary Kitchell donated the land to the city in 1908. The round Chautauqua Pavilion was built in 1911. Like so many early Chautauqua auditorium spaces, the claim about seating appears to us to be exaggerated. As many as 3500 people listened to William Jennings Bryan and Billy Sunday in this space, according to estimates of the time. (NPC's auditorium was said to seat 2500 people in 1904!) The city owns the present structure. The Pana Lions Club last renovated it in 1955. That project included adding a concrete floor, rewiring and the addition of new lights, and a complete paint job. Now the old structure is getting another overhaul. Funding is provided by a blend of generous private contributions and state tax dollars, more than \$270,000



The Pana Chautauqua was an interesting blend of the two main types of Chautauquas found in America a hundred years ago: the permanent assemblies and the tent chautauquas. There were no cottages or tents as in NPC, but the setting was enriched by a series of water features, a wonderfully picturesque bridge providing access to a small island, and of course, the Chautauqua Pavilion. When the annual "programs" were presented, these features would remind the area's population of its connection to the wider Chautauqua movement.

The Schuyler Bridge (left) was constructed in 1910 entirely of concrete. Today it gives a sense of a long-ago interest in architectural beauty and symmetry. It still provides access to a lovely island, now featuring a small playground area and picnic tables.

The citizens of Pana are justly proud of this piece of their local history. They recognize its state and national import. As one city official puts it: "Chautauqua was a focal point of family entertainment, cultural events, politics, and religion of an era. A return to Chautauqua events will only enhance Central Illinois as a great place to visit as well as work in, do business in, and live in."

in all. The Illinois Department of Transportation is the state-funding agency. The project has the support of State Senator Deanna Demuzio, who also represents our Jersey County area.

Much of the work is already underway. The auditorium has a new roof, and rotting timbers have been replaced in the wood and iron support structure for the Pavilion. We visited the project last November, and talked with city engineers and state officials about the next big step: the replacement of the stage. The repairs and renovations are planned carefully, consistent with the *National Register* status of the building, and in line with the *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

After all—**Preservation is progress.**

The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and its auxiliary, the Women's Relief Corps (WRC), were founded after 1865, and were still active in the early part of the twentieth century.





## The Classics in the Chapel

Last season the Historical Society presented a music program, the first of what we hope will be an annual Emerging Artists series. The event was part of our Piasa Bluffs Assembly programming, an effort to replicate the kind of programs that were offered in our community in the first several decades of our history, and especially during that period when the community was known as the Piasa Bluffs Assembly. The presentation was held on a Sunday evening in June, in the Chautauqua Chapel, "a great place for great music." About fifty people attended the performance, including visitors from Elsie, Grafton, and the Principia College community. Response was very enthusiastic, and well deserved.

The concert featured Erin Schreiber, a Bachelor of Music student at the world-acclaimed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. An Elsie resident and now 19, Erin has studied violin since age 4. She has appeared in recitals throughout the U.S., as well as Great Britain, Sweden, and Germany. Erin won the Lennox Young Artist's competition, the pre-college division of the Corpus Christi International Young Artists Competition, and has awards and honors. At the Curtis Institute she is studying with Joseph Silverstein and Pamela Frank. This was her first appearance at New Piasa Chautauqua.



Erin is participating in an international competition in March 2008. We are discussing a return performance with her for our 2008 season.



## Inherit the Wind.....

The 1955 play *Inherit the Wind* focused attention on a trial about "the science of evolution" in the mid-1920s, and on *William Jennings Bryan*. A son of Illinois, Bryan was a powerful and influential figure in American history for several decades. He was a three-time candidate for the American presidency. He was Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson, and a powerful orator who thought of himself as a "champion of the people." He was a regular speaker on the Chautauqua summer circuit. We believe he visited our Chautauqua on four different occasions.

Last season the Historical Society sponsored the *fifth* visit of William Jennings Bryan to our Chautauqua. A goodly crowd gathered at the Town Hall on a warm July Sunday evening to listen to the story of his life. "He" was actually our own Paul Brammeier, a Chautauqua resident since 1958, a member of the Historical Society's board, and recently retired. Paul was thrilled to give the Society's **Fifth Annual Platform Lecture**, re-enacting the role of William Jennings Bryan. If you were in the large crowd attending the lecture, you heard over and over "Who is this?" and "Isn't this terrific?" Yes, it was. And the Bryan saga continues—Paul will reprise his role at the 2008 Chautauqua Network meeting at Monteagle, Tenn. We know he will give a wonderful performance.



Bill Osborn collects a long-overdue ten-cent piece from William Jennings Bryan!

